

P02-253 - CHANGE IN SELF-INJURIOUS BEHAVIOUR: PATIENTS 'PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction: Patients and care providers have difficulty getting control of self-injurious behaviour. Nonetheless, there are patients who have successfully stopped self-injury.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to gain understanding of the process of stopping self-injury and to identify the determinants contributing to that achievement.

Methods: Semi structured interviews were conducted with twelve women with a long history of severe self-injurious behaviour who eventually succeeded in stopping that behaviour. The data were analysed based on of the Grounded Theory Method.

Results: It was found that the process of stopping self-injury consists of six phases:

- the phase of connecting and setting limits: feelings perceived as unsafe are explored, and ways of strengthening feelings of safety are pursued. This sense of safety allows patients to reach out more to others and themselves;
- the phase of increased self-esteem with a further deepening of contact with the self;
- the phase in which patients "learn to understand" themselves: increased self-understanding makes patients realise they can control their own lives;
- in the phase of autonomy patients make active choices to increase control of their lives and immediate environment;
- the phase of stopping self-injury: learning and using alternative strategies other than self-injury to cope with unbearable feelings;
- the phase of maintenance focuses on preventing a relapse into self-injurious behaviour.

Contact was identified as key to all phases of the process

Conclusions: Interventions should focus on making contact, encouraging people who self-injure to develop a positive self-image and learn alternative behaviour.